

NEW RELEASES

Florence Joelle STEALING FLOWERS

Zoltan Zol 005

★★★★

The sound of the 1950s brought right up to date



Jazzy licks mingle with pedal steel and smoochy night club vocals are backed by rumbling drums on this, the second album by Paris-born Londoner Joelle. The music has its feet in the sounds of Europe many decades ago and yet has the sharp, edgy feel of the London of today. Joelle sings with a cross-channel mystique and plays a neat, bluesy harp and is backed by the band that made her debut set, KISS OF FIRE, so entrancing and who make her live shows spellbinding.

Listen to the dark, brooding *The God Of Things*, where guitarist Paul Seacroft manages to conjure up images of both Django Reinhardt and Link Wray, or the adventurous cover of Duke Ellington's *Caravan*, where the vintage-sounding pedal steel is quite breathtaking. Throughout there's a snappy beat, percussion rather than drums, from ex-Gallon Drunk Arthur Lager. The result is a timeless mix of sounds, whether the cover of Louis Jordan's *Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby*, the bluesy rockabilly of *29 Bus Blues* or the *Asleep At The Wheel* hints of the self-penned *Darkest Before Dawn*. Exceptional—and the sort of colourful cross-pollination that you could expect to see on *Later With Jools*. **Nick Dalton**

www.florencejoelle.com

Ben Bochner HEARTLAND

No Label

★★★★

Bochner's HEARTLAND contains songs you need to embrace with your mind and soul



Raised in Chicago, a long-time Oregon resident, currently Austin, Texas based, Bochner was one of the New Folk Song finalists at this year's Kerrville Folk Festival. Some two decades ago he co-authored the novel *Caverns* with the late Ken Kesey (yes, the counter-culture icon) and others. The following sentence appears on Ben's web site: 'We're closer to our lovely little gadgets than we are to our loved ones.' However unpalatable, Bochner verbalises a truth! His finger points directly at the

major worldwide 21st century malaise.

Running for 70 minutes plus, *HEARTLAND* contains 13 songs composed by Bochner since the dawn of the new millennium. They're delivered by Ben's voice—lead and support—and acoustic guitar and not much else, with every song exceeding four minutes and 20seconds duration, apart from *Still Small Voice*. Opening with *Heartland*, a remembrance of surviving harsh Midwest's winters, it's followed by the talking blues *Still Small Voice* which, toward the outset, recalls: '...the gods would speak, And the people would hear.' *The Ballad Of Johnny Walker* traces the life of the now incarcerated United States citizen/Mujahideen convert, John Phillip Walker Lindh. *Nomad's Song* and the later *Midnight To Midnight* are songs for, and about, the road, *Her Hands* being a remembrance of love lost, while, supported vocally by Kris Crowley and Kathy Burleson, a deceased lumberjack's daughter is the central character in *Faller's Girl*.

Chicago's Wrigley Field, home to the Cubs, takes centre stage in *Big League Dreams*, wherein Bochner tells of a baseball player who ascended from the Cub's farm teams to the show—for only one game—and subsequently taught single A youngsters the sport's intricacies. *Bleeding At The Root* focuses on society's aforementioned malaise, while the pulsating heart of this collection lies in *Unknown Blessings* and the ensuing *Bells Of Lightning* with both possessing spiritual overtones. The seven-and-a-half minute long closer, and live recording, bears the concise title *You Can Say That My Empathy Is Starting To Atrophy, But Don't You Underestimate The Depth Of My Apathy*. A no-holds-barred expose of 21st century society mores (peppered with home truths), unsuitable for airplay, Ben is accompanied thereon by Amanda LeBlanc (vocals) and Hank Shreve (harmonica).

Arthur Wood

www.benbochner.com

Ellis WHEREVER YOU ARE

Singing Crow Music

★★★★☆

Infectious, engaging, breathtaking and inspirational.



Houston, Texas born, Minneapolis, Minnesota based Ellis (Delaney nee Bergeron) was one of the half-dozen New Folk Song Contest winners at this year's Kerrville Folk Festival. *WHEREVER YOU ARE* is a triple disc set, discs one and two combined spanning almost 100 minutes (duration), with each disc featuring eight songs. *WHEREVER YOU ARE* was recorded on October 20, 2012 at the White Bear Unitarian Universalist Church in Mahtomedi, Minnesota. Disc three delivers ten songs [*], seven drawn from Disc 1, stripped of Ellis' introductions and audience applause.

Ellis has likened sharing her songs with an audience as 'a conversation,' and proof of that summation is contained on discs one and two. Possessed of an infectious laugh, which on first hearing may take you aback, her between songs links are half 'oh my gosh' goofy, half crystal clear personal convictions. Ellis launches disc one with the autumnal and inspirational *500 Crows* [*]—one of her New Folk submissions—a paean to communication blessed by the open and personal revelation: 'Love I am part heartache, part joyful child, I'm a grown up that's still growing up.' Accepted earthly perceptions are turned on their head in *How Would It Be* [*]—sic. 'How would you feel if the ground was really the sky,' the ensuing *Red Light* advocates openness to life's magical moments, while *Comes Back To Me* [*] is launched by the confession: 'I have a memory like a big fishing net, When things fall out I tend to forget.' Written for, and about, her beloved grandmother, *You Are Royalty To Me* [*] poses the question: 'How do you write a song for a queen?' and subsequently affirms: 'I am who I am, because I was loved by a queen.' *Right On Time* [*] written during the late noughties for her daughter, is followed by *Coffee Song* [*] a humorous tribute to the musician's helpless bean 'n' caffeine addiction, and disc one closes with the inspirational *Wherever You Are* [*] complete with audience participation.

Disc two opens with *Blackbird* [*] another avian world themed number, and doubling as a road song is followed on personal and universal levels by the tender *Coming Home To You*. A 'damned if you do, damned if you don't' dharma inspired exploration of the human condition is undertaken in *Tigers Above, Tigers Below*, while *Right Now* [*] reveals

initially 'Nobody knows everything' and moves on to bid the listener 'live in the moment' It's followed by the light-hearted Let's Go To Yoga, while in Who Am I the narrator seeks to define herself and her life. Co-written with partner Terri, the celebratory and self-explanatory penultimate song I Belong Here Next To You [*] ends the second set, and is followed by the encore Oak Tree.

Arthur Wood

www.ellis-music.com/news

Eric Brace & Peter Cooper THE COMEBACK ALBUM

Red Beet Records
RBR CD015

★★★★★

These two musicians love what they are doing and want to touch the listener with their songs: They do

I first became aware of Eric Brace several years ago via his band Last Train Home and I've long admired Peter



Cooper as one of the most intuitive music journalists. Together this pair have teamed up to create highly intelligent, country-flavoured music ... along the way building a sizeable cult following. The duo does not sound like they are on the comeback trail; they sound like they are in the prime of their career. Tuneful, clever and carefully observed, their material has all the strengths expected of classic country songwriters, plus one more—whimsy. Not only that, but with the assistance of master session player/producer Thomm Jutz and such skilled musicians as Lloyd Green, Jen Gunderman, Rory Hoffman, Richard Bennett, Fats Kaplin, Paul Griffith and David Jacques, they have clothed those songs in immaculately thought-out arrangements.

They shift effortlessly between country, blues and classic singer-songwriter fare for influences, but put their own stamp on it to make the whole album totally unique. Vocal showcases among the dozen selections include their fine revival

of Tom T. Hall's *Mad*, a long forgotten Dave Dudley hit from 1964. This version features guest appearances by 87-year-old Mac Wiseman, legendary guitar twanger Duane Eddy and mandolin supremo Marty Stuart. Other highlights include the gorgeous *She Can't Be Herself* vocal duet with stunning Lloyd Green pedal steel and a superb new rendition of Last Train Home's *Kissing Booth*, though there's not really any disposable numbers on the disc. That's not only due to the duo's decisive vocals, but also the sheer quality of the songs. Alongside their own originals they also offer David Halley's *Rain Don't Fall* and Karl Straub's *Carolina*. The latter is something of a minor classic to which they bring a melancholy lilt to the lyrics, while the acoustic guitars, Green's pedal steel and spare percussion flesh out the song's haunting melody. This pair have a sound very much of their own and their songs speak of life through rich and vibrant characterisations. One to cherish for a very, very long time. **Alan Cackett**

www.redbeetrecords.com

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Stephen Fearing

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20th October • Twickenham - Twickfolk
23rd October • Hempstead - Bluebell Inn
24th October • Otterton - Otterton Mill
25th October • Nottingham - The Guitar Bar at Hotel Deux
26th October • Holmfirth - Hepworth Village Hall
27th October • Bristol - Comedy Box at the Hen & Chicken
29th October • Liverpool - Unity Theatre
1st November • Belfast, N. Ireland - TBA

New Album Between Hurricanes available at iTunes UK

"As song after song illustrates on Between Hurricanes, Fearing delivers his reflections, recollections and observations with an enveloping lyricism and he has, in the past quarter of a century, become the complete artist."
-Penguin Eggs



www.stephenfearing.com

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